

## **VII. Maine**

### **Background and Current Status:**

In 2000, Maine passed legislation formally establishing the Maine Newborn Hearing Program. The legislation did not mandate newborn hearing screening. It did require birthing hospitals to inform new parents of the importance of hearing screening and intervention. If a birthing hospital does not provide screening, it is required to make a referral for the parents to a provider who does. Hospitals and other screening providers are required to report the results of screening to the Maine Newborn Hearing Program (MNHP). Two new positions were authorized to carry out MNHP activities and a special Advisory Board will be created to provide oversight.

In a 1999 survey of birthing hospitals, only 31% of birthing hospitals were found to offer screening to all newborns. Thirty-nine percent of newborns were born in those hospitals. There was no central tracking of newborn hearing screening results and it was impossible to evaluate the effectiveness of screening activities. The proposal points out that almost half of all birthing hospitals have less than 200 deliveries a year, and highlights this fact as a particular challenge to the new program.

Another major challenge is the lack of access in much of rural Maine (a significant portion of the state) to diagnostic audiological services and early intervention services for children with hearing loss.

### **Proposed Tracking and Surveillance Activities:**

Newborn hearing information and reports from hospitals and audiologists will be linked monthly with electronic birth certificates and newborn bloodspot screening data. Birth defects program data will be used when it is available.

The project will collaborate with the University of Maine at Orono (UMO) in the development of the surveillance and tracking system. UMO is developing the Children at-risk Database (CARD) and will establish linkage with the Maine Hearing Program surveillance in the electronic birth certificate/newborn bloodspot screening activities.

Methods for screening and follow up will be developed to assure accurate data collection and tracking of infants screened for hearing impairment for use by birthing hospitals and by audiologic diagnostic centers.

Technical assistance will be provided to birthing hospital to promote the development and improvement of hospital based screening programs. Funding for grants to hospitals will be sought to assist in their efforts. Birthing hospitals with hearing screening programs will identify a contact person on their staff who will work with the Maine Newborn Hearing Program - a model established in Maine's bloodspot screening program.

In order to increase access to pediatric audiologic diagnostic evaluation and intervention services, the

project will conduct a survey of licensed audiologists, provide special training opportunities for audiologists, and work to establish better referral networks among state organizations and providers. The project will explore ways to facilitate recruitment of qualified audiologists in under-served areas of Maine.

The project will develop guidelines for hearing screening, audiologic evaluation and intervention and develop informational materials for families. The project will use the Advisory Board and the Children with Special Health Needs Program to obtain review of the new materials.

**For more information about the Maine program please contact:**

Eleanor Mulcahy

(207) 287-4623

[eleanor.a.mulcahy@state.me.us](mailto:eleanor.a.mulcahy@state.me.us)